

# WORLD ORT TIMES



**To hell and back**  
GA delegates grapple with the reality of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp.

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**ORT family album**  
A selection of images from the General Assembly and the Israel mission.

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**Mission of possibilities**  
Touring World ORT's achievements in Israel gives a taste of greater things to come.

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## GA hits all the right notes

An exciting new chapter in the history of World ORT has opened at the General Assembly in Warsaw with the election of a new president and adoption of a new constitution.

London-based scientist and businessman Dr Jean de Gunzburg was the unanimous choice to succeed Sir Maurice Hatter, for whom he deputised during his four-year term. Sir Maurice received a standing ovation for his enormous contribution to what he described as "one of the most remarkable organisations in the Jewish world" (full story, page 3).

Delegates also overwhelmingly approved a new constitution – 164 for and only two against with one abstention – which will streamline World ORT's governance while enhancing accountability, transparency and efficiency.

It was the climax to an emotional three days in the heart of what had been, within living memory, Europe's largest Jewish community. Ahead of debating and voting on critical issues affecting the future of World ORT, delegates retraced the steps of Jewish martyrs in the Warsaw Ghetto, Auschwitz and Birkenau. Commemoration ceremonies and guided tours created bonds of tears and pride between the living and the dead and a renewed vigour amongst General Assembly delegates to commit to World ORT's mission for the benefit of future generations.

Critical to the successful execution of that mission is the new governance structure and comprehensive strategic plan, which was overwhelmingly adopted by delegates. These radical reforms underpin Dr de Gunzburg's vision of making World ORT "the household name of Jewish education".

"The next step will be to put the strategic



The evocative rendition of the theme from Fiddler on the Roof by these gifted students from Kiryat Yam was just one example of the dazzling entertainment at the GA gala dinner.

plan to music, to put it into being," Dr de Gunzburg, a descendant of World ORT co-founder Baron Horace de Gunzburg, told the Gala Dinner. "We have lay leaders but we need even more and even better; staff we have but we need more and better. And to do that we need more funding; to have more funding we need to get out the message of World ORT."

Dr de Gunzburg, whose late mother was sister to Charles and Edgar Bronfman, said

that one way to put World ORT's image on a par with its performance in the field was to recruit more people worthy of "this fantastic organisation" of which, he told the General Assembly, he was "honoured and moved to have been elected president".

One example of the new talent drawn to World ORT is the appointment at the General Assembly of Professor Victor Halberstadt to chair the reinvigorated Academic Advisory Committee, which

advises World ORT on how to develop its educational provision to keep pace with socio-economic trends. In addition to being Professor of Public Economics at Leiden University, Professor Halberstadt has held senior positions with a wide range of high profile companies and institutions, including Director of the International Advisors Group of Goldman Sachs and Advisor to the Secretary-General of the OECD.

Another example is the election of Gene Ribakoff as Deputy President of World ORT. Mr Ribakoff became Chairman of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in 2004 and has served as a board member of the organisations which merged to form America's United Jewish Communities.

The one constant among all the changes is World ORT's commitment to providing excellence in education to people around the world.

"The lessons of the past are important in Jewish life," Dr de Gunzburg told the General Assembly. "The history of World ORT is the history of the Jewish People. The future comes from continuity with World ORT's traditional value of educating for life."

World ORT Director General Robert Singer said the spirit of the General Assembly had been very constructive.

"This General Assembly marks a very significant change of transmission from one generation of lay leaders to another," Mr Singer said. "I believe that Dr de Gunzburg receives a very efficient, excellent organisation and I have no doubt – knowing him and working with him over the last four years – that he will take it to new heights both as an educational organisation and as a movement of the Jewish People around the world."

## New President's vision for World ORT

After 25 years as a molecular biologist, Dr Jean de Gunzburg is thinking big – World ORT will no longer be consigned to being the Jewish world's "best kept secret".

The French-born cancer researcher and venture capitalist is determined to use his scientific rigour and entrepreneurial flair to make the world sit up and take notice of ORT.

"Our programmes are very good but the image of our programmes isn't in line with what they are," Dr de Gunzburg said. "We need to move the perception to where the reality is."

With a better public image, World ORT

will be placed to make better connections with a wider range of people and that, in turn, will not only help the organisation in the ever more competitive area of fundraising but to draw even more talent into realising World ORT's mission of educating for life.

"I want to be able to recruit people of which World ORT is worthy," Dr de Gunzburg said, noting that the process had already started with the appointment of Professor Victor Halberstadt to chair the Academic Advisory Committee.

An objective bystander could say that Dr de Gunzburg's own involvement in

World ORT is also indicative of the new stream of talent that is helping the organisation to grow.

Born at the confluence of two great Jewish families – the Bronfmans and the de Gunzburgs – Dr de Gunzburg took the unusual route of scientific research rather than big business. Research, including time at such renowned places as the Curie Institute in Paris and MIT in America, saw him contributing to humanity by investigating cancer. But the enormous demands of such important research

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# A shelter from the storm

General Assembly delegates paid homage to those who fought, died and survived the Holocaust in moving commemorations at the Janusz Korczak orphanage, the Gesia Jewish Cemetery, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising memorial, and Birkenau. In this extract from the new book *ORT, The Second World War and the Rehabilitation of Holocaust Survivors*, Dr Sarah Kavanaugh describes how ORT provided a shelter from the storm in the Polish capital.

On 22 July 1942 the mass deportations to Treblinka started from the Warsaw ghetto. Due to the huge reduction in the population at this time, workshops were closed and entire streets in the ghetto were laid to waste. Unable to remove all their machinery from the newly emptied workshops, ORT was forced in many respects to start again. It opened new workshops in an attempt to save lives. Those running the ORT courses knew that anyone with an ORT certificate could get a place in a ghetto workshop and that, most importantly, those in the workshops were registered as legal workers at the German Labour Office and therefore less likely to be deported. Rachel Gourman, a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and a former ORT employee writes how, "Again a glimpse of light entered the shops. Naked people received clothes and the barefoot were given shoes. Whoever managed to escape from the camps, went directly to ORT." This shows that ORT's extraordinary reputation was not merely confined to the ghetto.

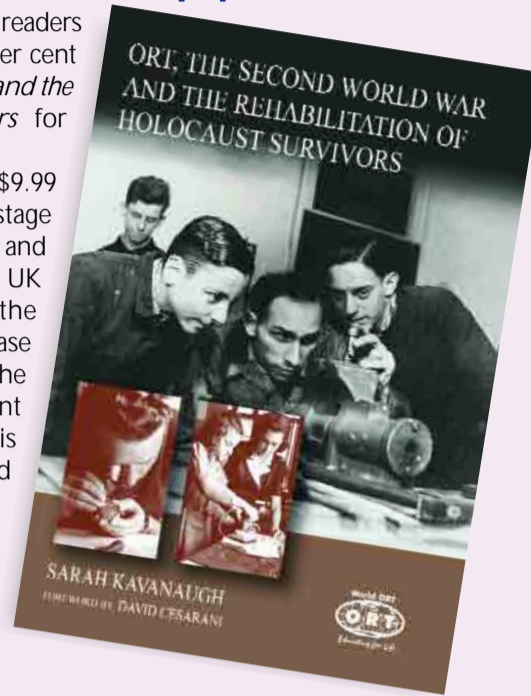
An ORT certificate not only gave workers a legal status in the ghetto, but could also secure extra rations as well. The scarcity of food inside the ghetto meant that nearly all the population were on starvation rations. Abraham Lewent recalls: "The hunger in the ghetto was so great, was so bad, that people were laying on the streets and dying ... And every day thousands and thousands died just from malnutrition because the Germans didn't give anything for the people in the

## Discount for ORT supporters

Valentine Mitchell Publishers are offering readers of the World ORT Times a generous 20 per cent discount on *ORT, The Second World War and the Rehabilitation of Holocaust Survivors* for orders received by December 31, 2008.

For North American readers, that's a \$9.99 saving on the \$49.95 cover price – postage and packing costs \$5.50 for the first book and \$1.50 for each subsequent book. For UK readers, that's a £5.99 saving on the recommended retail price of £29.95. Please allow £2.50 postage and packing for the first book and £1.50 for each subsequent book. Postage for the rest of the world is charged at £3.50 for the first book and £1.50 for each book thereafter.

To order your copy, quoting reference ORT08, please contact Toby Harris at toby.harris@vmbooks.com. Or phone him on +44 (0)20 8952 9526, fax +44 (0)20 8952 9242.



By the summer of 1941, the work of ORT in the ghetto had expanded from the early, almost experimental, courses into a wide array of vocational training programmes. There was a total of 24 courses on offer for 832 boys and 24 courses for 818 girls. In addition there were 16 mixed courses for 681 pupils which made a total of 2,331 pupils.

By May 1941 a total of 1,195 people in the ghetto had completed ORT courses in locksmithing, auto mechanics, optical work and candy-making. By the end of August 1941 ORT had a total of 4,000 pupils. Because Warsaw had been Europe's largest Jewish community, there was no shortage of teachers. The ghetto was full of eminent professors excelling in subjects across the academic spectrum.

The deportations to Treblinka from Warsaw continued and on 18 January 1943, Joseph Jashunsky, Director of ORT in Warsaw, was deported with his family. Rachel Gourman describes his dedication to ORT and his tireless work in the ghetto: "Up to the last day of his life he did his work. Exhausted and depressed, he would arrive at his office early in the morning and do everything necessary so that things might go on normally ... Sometimes he arrived with broken glasses, his face covered with blood. Because of his near-sightedness, he would not notice a German coming his way and so would not leave the pavement, or take off his hat, or would be guilty of committing some other 'offence'."

ghetto to eat. There was no such thing. You can't walk in and buy anything, or getting any rations. It's your hard luck. If you don't have it, you die, and that's what it was."

If these starvation rations could be supplemented in any way, chances of survival increased dramatically. Gourman writes, "It was known in the Ghetto that at the ORT workshops, people received a plate of soup and 100g of bread each day. People came to get a bit of food and to forget their sorrows

for a moment." It was not only physical sustenance that ORT supplied to its workers but also intellectual nourishment. She explains: "In ORT offices one could forget the nightmare of reality and find new courage to live: the offices became a kind of a literary and political circle. In addition to many teachers and instructors of various courses, other 'habitués' who passed through Lezno Street, began to drop in for a chat and a glass of tea."

## Working for the common good

The structural reform of World ORT, which was enthusiastically approved at the General Assembly, is in keeping with the globalised environment of the 21st century.

As well as allowing World ORT to work more efficiently, ensuring transparency and accountability, the restructuring represents a seismic shift away from geographical representation and towards the creation of a skills-drive organisation.

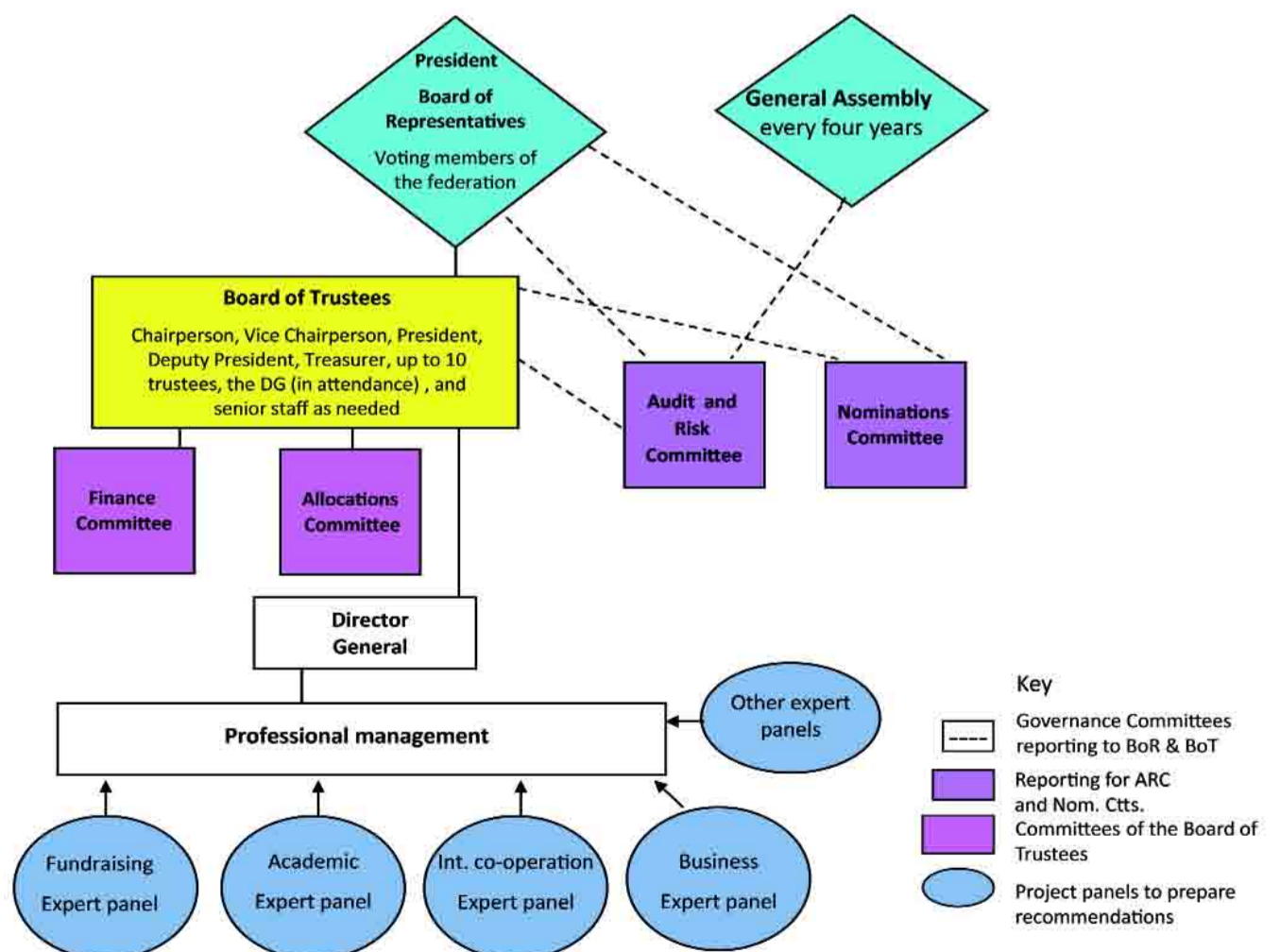
"Representation is still important but the people at World ORT should not be sitting behind a flag of their national organisation," said Dr de Gunzburg, who presented an overview of the structure at the General Assembly. "There remain geographical checks and balances but there is one organ which is now accountable and that is the Board of Trustees, and its members are there to work for World ORT, not to represent their countries."

"The organisation has been streamlined with the goal of everyone working for the good of the whole, not just the parts," he added.

At the heart of the new structure is the Board of Trustees, which will meet four times a year to manage the affairs of World ORT, including approving the annual budget, reviewing budgetary trends in line with the strategic plan and appointing expert committees of lay leaders and professionals. It will also oversee the working of the Director General, World ORT's most senior professional.

Among the 15 people sitting on the Board of Trustees are the five World ORT Officers – the President and Deputy President, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, the Secretary and the Treasurer. All elections of Trustees and Officers will be by secret ballot.

The new Board of Representatives, chaired by the President, meets once a year and provides a forum for the discussion of major policy items. It approves the strategic plan



and the Director General's annual programme as well as the number of national delegates to the General Assembly. It also elects Officers – except the President and Deputy President who are elected by the GA – as well as chairmen and members of other committees, and it can change World ORT's by-laws.

The General Assembly continues to meet every four years and, with a two-thirds majority, is the only body that can change World ORT's constitution. It is the GA which promotes the involvement and awareness of World ORT's operations internationally as well as making long-term

recommendations and non-binding policy resolutions.

Among the other organs is the Audit and Risk Committee, whose Chairman is elected by the General Assembly, and which ensures the integrity of World ORT's financial reporting and auditing by reviewing conflicts of interest, seeing to it that the external auditor is independent, objective and thorough and fostering a culture and expectation of effective oversight. The Committee has unrestricted access to management, staff and information.

## Message from the Director General



When deciding where to stage the largest World ORT gathering that takes place only once every four years, it was with mixed feelings that we decided upon Poland as the venue. Once the home to the one of the largest, most thriving Jewish Communities in the world, Poland today evokes feelings of sorrow and pain for most, as it bore witness to one of the darkest times in Jewish History. However, whatever mixed feelings we might have had prior to the event, our choice was quickly vindicated once we were there, and it became apparent that it was precisely in Warsaw, Poland that hundreds of Jews needed to gather, to commemorate the past, to look towards the future, to stand together in unity and to say 'Am Yisrael Chai!'. As someone once stated, "History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be un-lived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again."

The journey on which we embarked together was filled with emotion as we visited many historical sites beginning with the orphanage of Janusz Korczak, the renowned writer of children's books who sacrificed his life to save Jewish orphans. The building which housed the orphanage was poignantly also the site of one of ORT's training facilities before the war, reminding us of the bravery and courage exhibited by the ORT members during that time. The memorial ceremony at the entrance to the Warsaw Ghetto was truly moving as representatives from ORT movements around the world were given an opportunity to pay tribute to the millions who perished in the Holocaust as well as to salute the heroism of the ghetto fighters, led by Mordecai Anielewicz. During this unique coming together of more than 250 lay leaders and professionals we were afforded a special perspective by being in Poland, which culminated in the emotional march from Auschwitz to Birkenau.

Not only was the General Assembly meeting an opportunity for lay and professional ORT members to meet, but it also resulted in the adoption of a new, reformed governance structure, which was the next, natural step after having streamlined the financial process over the last four years. Under the Presidency of Sir Maurice Hatter, the organization benefited from his pragmatism, strength and generosity and I would like to thank him for his leadership and friendship. The changes we have now undergone will equip us to face the challenges of today and under our new President, Dr. Jean de Gunzburg, who hails from one of the founding families of ORT, and whose intellect and vision will no doubt take us from strength to strength.

At the time of writing this message, we are preparing for the start of the school year in many countries around the world. We at World ORT were fortunate to recently welcome the Senior Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Education in Israel Dr. Itzik Tomer to our offices. The success of our Science Journey programme in Israel is due to the strong partnership we have with his Ministry and we can only hope to build on this, creating new opportunities for our students there. At this, the beginning of a new school year, we still have many obstacles to overcome, most profoundly in the Former Soviet Union, where for the last few years, our students annually face the threat of the cut in funding towards their schools. There has been a revival of our schools in France, which continue to grow, along with many of our programmes throughout Europe. I would like to wish all our students a successful academic year. The success of our students is testament to the devotion and commitment of our donors and lay leaders, without whom none of what we achieve would be possible. Wishing you all a sweet, happy New Year.

Robert Singer

# Sir Maurice bows out

In what was the emotional nadir of the General Assembly, more than 200 people from 32 countries took a specially chartered train from Warsaw to Oswiecim – an opportunity for inter-generational understanding and renewed commitment to the Jewish community.

A visibly moved Sir Maurice told the packed banquet hall at the Warsaw Hilton that he had been determined during his time as president to make World ORT more attractive to donors.

"It's not enough that our cause is worthwhile," he said. "Donors need to know that their investment is safe, that the funds they give us will go where they are supposed to go, that they will not be diverted and that they will not be swallowed up by excessive overheads... I believe that we have succeeded in this mission. We have full transparency in place and the proof is that our donor income has increased in both quantity and quality. We are seeing major philanthropies having the confidence to invest in World ORT, knowing that with us 'what you see is what you get'. This confidence and these funds are now helping us to move forward with our plans and our ambitious projects. At the end of the day it is our students and their families who benefit."

Sir Maurice characterised his term as a period of transition for World ORT in its adoption of new financial methods as well as new educational methods as evidenced by the supply of high-tech smart classes and intelligent laboratories to Israeli



Outgoing President Sir Maurice greets his successor, Dr Jean de Gunzburg, at the Gala Dinner.

schools as part of the Kadima Mada (Science Journey) programme.

The third element of the modernisation programme, the adoption of new governance structures, "will ensure that World ORT in the 21st century is truly fit for purpose and ready to move ever upwards, fulfilling an ancient vision in a modern setting".

Sir Maurice concluded with a message to his successor and friend Dr de Gunzburg.

"I know that you share my passion for ORT and that you will lead it devotedly. Though the organisation is now moving to

a new phase in its history, its values and its mission remain constant. You will bring your own talents and your own energy to the job. All I ask is that, in taking World ORT forward, you cherish it, protect its values and vigorously champion its cause in all the forums that you will be called upon to address.

"As I step down from the presidency, I can assure you all that you can always call upon me for help, advice or simply to be a sympathetic listening ear. Above all, I am and I shall always remain - a committed Orlist."

## To hell and back

In what was the emotional nadir of the General Assembly, more than 200 people from 32 countries took a specially chartered train from Warsaw to Oswiecim – an opportunity for inter-generational understanding and renewed commitment to the Jewish community.

It is easy to find the Mayor of Lower Galilee, Moti Dotan, in a crowd - his exuberance and sense of humour mean that he often has those around him laughing long and hard.

But it was a sombre, more contemplative man who returned to Warsaw after spending the day with General Assembly delegates at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where 1.5 million Jews were murdered during the war.

"My parents are both Holocaust Survivors," Mayor Dotan said. "My father was in Auschwitz and Dachau; my mother spent time in Auschwitz and Treblinka. They

met on their way to Israel."

Like many Survivors, Mayor Dotan's parents never talked to their children about their experiences. But they did open up to their grand-daughter who was writing a school project about family history.

"My daughter told me what they had said and I couldn't believe it. I asked my aunt if it was true and she said it was only part of the truth – the whole truth was far worse. I had thought about coming to Auschwitz; I don't know why I didn't come before but now that I have seen it I feel I understand

my parents a little bit more," Mayor Dotan, who was elected to World ORT's Board of Trustees, said.

He found the company of Jews from around the world comforting as he walked through that valley of the shadow of death, a reminder of the vitality and vision with which Survivors had not only hauled themselves out of victimhood but had built the foundations of prosperity and hope for their children and grandchildren.

The optimism and drive that was

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A window on to the past: Survivor Mikhail Salomonovic on the train to Oswiecim.

# From the alter heim



entering Auschwitz



Orit Ukraine students moved to tears at Auschwitz



marching to Birkenau



at the Gęsia Jewish cemetery, Warsaw



setting off on the march to Birkenau



Birkenau - listening to Survivor Ariel Yehaloni



the end of the line - lighting memorial candles at Birkenau



paying our respects at the cemetery in Warsaw



in the barracks at Birkenau



lighting the flame of remembrance at the Ghetto Uprising memorial



commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising



the IDF honour guard at the Ghetto Uprising commemorations



leaving the mass grave at Gęsia



smiles amid the tears



laying a wreath for the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising



a member of the terrific IDF vocal group mingles with delegates at the EA dinner



the lovely Orit students from Vilnius helping us to celebrate Israel's 60th birthday



and we still had plenty of time to talk business

# to the Promised Land



we've arrived in Israel!



opening a new science classroom at Tirst HaKarmel



spiritual leaders of the Ethiopian community join us at Kiryat Yam



all things point to a great future!



enjoying hearing about Harfesh High School



at the site of the Dan and Betty Kahn science centre



a young virtuoso at the Neshet gala



chatting to a student at Sha'ar HaNegev



meeting Druze students at Harfesh



time out at one of Kiryat Yam's great restaurants



having a great time at the Neshet gala



at a presentation in Sha'ar HaNegev's rocket proof classroom



it's great to meet students that World ORT is helping



great food and wonderful company



socialising at the Neshet gala dinner



chatting to students at the entrance to the bomb shelter at Sha'ar HaNegev



the wonderful choir at Kiryat Yam!



for future generations - placing a stone capsule in the foundations of the Schoenbaum science park in Kiryat Yam



closing ceremony at Yad Mordechai

# New President

Continued from page 1

pushed aside his latent desire for Jewish philanthropy.

"The turning point was when [former World ORT Deputy Director General] Gideon Meyer contacted my family asking us to contribute to the establishment of an ICT laboratory in a school in St Petersburg," he said. "I started to be involved in ORT. ORT is one of those things that you start dipping your toe in the water and before you know it you're swimming."

That school, the de Gunzburg School, is now recognised as one of the best in a city

known for its high educational and cultural standards. And he is keen to replicate its success to other ORT projects around the world, partly out of a sense of tradition, of a cultural inheritance passed down from his great grand-uncle Baron Horace de Gunzburg, who co-founded ORT in St Petersburg in 1880; but also out of a recognition that as a Jew he has a special obligation to help his fellow Jews.

"There are all kinds of good deeds you can do in life but, on the face of it, who else but the Jews help the Jews? So it's my choice to help a Jewish organisation. And it's very important to me to be involved with ORT because it's a Jewish organisation which is involved in education. As a scientist I did some teaching so I have a special interest in education. Our kids are our future and their education is the preparation of the

future of mankind," Dr de Gunzburg, the father of seven children, said.

He can draw on an extraordinarily rich, but highly appropriate, set of skills to steer World ORT into realising its mission. In addition to his scientific research, Dr de Gunzburg has sat on scientific commissions and on the advisory council of the Harvard-MIT Division of Health Sciences and Technology; he has been President of the Samuel and Saidye Bronfman Family Foundation and, most recently, Deputy President of World ORT.

The author of more than 70 publications in international, peer-reviewed scientific journals moved from Paris to London where he has become a partner and senior scientific advisor in a start-up biotechnology company, Da Volterra, which develops products to counter the growing threat of bacterial

resistance to antibiotics.

But it his passion for World ORT's brand of philanthropy, more than his remarkable qualifications, which may well prove to be most attractive to those he invites to join its mission.

"I've reached a point in my life where just giving money to an organisation isn't good enough and what's more precious to me than money is my time – so I give it," he said. "I don't regret that decision at all; I'm quite proud of it because ORT's such a fantastic organisation. If I can help it, even just a little, to advance then I will also have helped kids around the world... ORT isn't only teaching them to be good in an educational sense but also to be *menschen*, to have a real human dimension, to know who they are – and to know they are Jewish, which in today's world isn't easy.

# To hell and back

Continued from page 3

miraculously salvaged from the flames of the crematoria was symbolised not least by World ORT's commemoration ceremony at Birkenau, which fell on Yom Yerushalayim – the anniversary of the Israeli capital's reunification in the Six-Day War.

The Director-General of the Ministry of Transport, Gideon Sidderman, whose uncle and aunt and their five children were murdered in the Shoah, addressed the ceremony on behalf of the Israeli government.

Mr Sidderman reviewed the horrors of the place which had already left General Assembly delegates visibly shaken – men separated from their wives, children ripped from their mothers' arms, the shaved heads and skeletal inmates, the mechanised murder of the gas chambers and the final indignity of the crematoria.

"Yet exactly at this place, where the railway tracks ended together with the lives of hundreds of thousands of our people, this is the very station from which the Jewish people began their momentous journey towards their future," he said.

And yet, once again – despite the cries of "never again" – there were people calling for the annihilation of the Jewish People, prompting Mr Sidderman to end on a defiant note.

"No more and never again will a Jew find himself helpless under threat; no more and never again will a Jew face humiliation and persecution just because he is a Jew; no more and never again will a Jewish mother be separated from her children; no more and never again will an alien hand be raised against a Jewish child without a response. We cannot be overcome; we are firm in our determination to defend ourselves. This is our obligation, the promise that binds us – the living – to our murdered innocent brothers and sisters. May their memory be blessed and may we say here Am Yisrael Chai!"

Professor Benjamin Ish-Shalom, the founder and rector of Beit Morasha: The Academic Centre for Jewish Studies and Leadership, is a high profile recruit to World ORT's Academic Advisory Council. A Sabra – his mother's family has lived in Eretz Yisrael for eight generations – Professor Ish-Shalom nevertheless grew up in the shadow of what happened at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

"My father's entire family was murdered here," he said. "The whole atmosphere at home was under this shadow. We didn't speak about it but as a child I could feel it."

This was his first visit to Auschwitz, although most of his six sons have visited.

"Nothing is new to me – I am very familiar with the facts and the photographs. But to be here is very different," he said before spreading some earth from his garden in Jerusalem into the ground "for those who wanted to be buried in Israel".

Among the delegates, most of whom wore white World ORT T-shirts emblazoned with "Educating for Life" as they walked through the death camp, were some parent-child couples

On his last visit to Auschwitz, the Chairman of World ORT's Finance Committee, Alan Berkowitz, promised himself that he would never return. But he changed his mind thanks to the prospect of making the journey with his youngest son, Bobby.

"To have him with me is so wonderful," Mr Berkowitz said as he walked out the camp gates. "I'm finding it very difficult but having Bobby with me makes it more bearable."

Shelley Fagel, who chairs World ORT's Allocations Committee, made the trip with her daughter Keri, who was marking her birthday.

"So many birthdays didn't happen here; I wanted to be here with her and share this experience with her and to know that when I'm gone she will go on with her children," Mrs Fagel said.

For Keri, witnessing the remnants of such unimaginable evil motivates her to live her life well.

"It makes me more compassionate, to work in the Jewish community, that I will raise my children Jewish and not be complacent," she said.

For Dr Radan Salomonovic, of ORT in the Czech Republic, and his father Mikhail, it was a journey into a painful past, one which they had avoided discussing for many years.

Mikhail Salomonovic was a child when he and his family were confined to the Lodz Ghetto. Later in the war they spent a short time at Auschwitz before being dragged into Germany, away from the advancing Soviet army. Mikhail is one of only 27 children from the 10,000 Jews of Ostrava, near the Polish border, who survived the war.

Sitting in the air conditioned comfort of World ORT's chartered train was a world away from the cattle cars of 65 years ago, but what was merely evocative for most of the passengers was far more to the Survivors on board. In spite of the memories being brought to the surface, Mikhail said he could still be optimistic about the future. However, that hope is assaulted by the attitudes he encounters.

"Even today, when applying for National Insurance for the forced labour I did during the war, German bureaucrats ask me if I worked voluntarily in the Ghetto," Mikhail said. "And for compensation for the property stolen, the bureaucrats ask for receipts from the SS officers that took it!"

For Radan, the effect of his father's experiences on his own character did not become apparent until he, too, became a father.

"Many people speak about 'second generation' issues and the impact this has on your character. But I didn't see it," Radan said. "But when my son Samuel was born a year ago I realised that I had to reconsider certain things very quickly. It has intensified my work for the Jewish community.



General Assembly delegates prepare to march to Birkenau.

# Elite donors' faith in ORT

As part of the General Assembly in Warsaw a special reception for World ORT's elite group of donors, The 1880 Society, was held at the home of the Israeli Ambassador, His Excellency David Peleg.

Guests arrived to the sound of a Klezmer band and were able to socialise with fellow 1880 Society members from around the world while enjoying a sumptuous buffet dinner and cocktails.

New members were presented with their medals by World ORT Director General Robert Singer: Gene Ribakoff, the new Deputy President of World ORT and his wife Stephanie, and the youngest ever member, Arturo Merikanskas and his wife Monica.

Membership of The 1880 Society has three levels: bronze for those who pledge at least \$100,000, silver for those who pledge at least \$250,000, and gold for those who pledge at least \$500,000.

Members receive a bronze, silver or gold medal specially commissioned by World ORT and struck by the Israeli Government Coins and Medal Corporation. Each medal features the portraits of ORT's founding fathers on one side and the name of the Israeli capital, Jerusalem, in 12 languages on the other.

Addressing the guests, outgoing World ORT President Sir Maurice said he was proud to be among a group of people who "share my belief and my faith in ORT and everything that it stands for".

The 1880 Society was, he said, an elite group amongst the "wonderful world of ORT supporters".

"It consists of a select number of individuals who have demonstrated their commitment to ORT by donating large sums to its educational projects. To all of you I say a hearty 'thank you', but, more importantly, I say to you, 'don't stop now!'"

Sir Maurice noted that during their stay in Poland, participants in the General Assembly were walking in the footsteps of



The 1880 Society's youngest member, Arturo Merikanskas (right) with his wife Monica and Israel's Ambassador to Poland, David Peleg.

those who were rounded up and sent to their deaths as well as visiting the site of heroic Jewish resistance.

But, while nothing compared to the catastrophe of the Holocaust, new generations had arisen which had their own needs.

"The demand for our services is as great as ever," he said. "So I say to our wonderful donors, 'Don't stop now!' If last year you reached the bronze tier of 1880 Society membership, go that extra mile and aim for silver. If you're a silver member then, in this Olympic year, go for gold! For the gold

members, you've proved that you can do it once; it should be no trouble for you to do it again."

It was a duty for everyone who had made the pilgrimage to Holocaust sites to invest their efforts and resources to prevent such horror befalling the Jewish people ever again, he said.

"For ORT that means ensuring that our young people – both in Israel and the Diaspora – have the education, the knowledge and the skills to build a brave new world and to create just, productive societies."

## Building bridges

World ORT's programmes are a "beautiful example" of building bridges between individuals and nations, said the President of Poland, Lech Kaczynski, in an address delivered on his behalf to the General Assembly.

In a warm welcome to World ORT delegates, President Kaczynski noted the centuries of contribution to Poland's economy and culture by the large Jewish community that once existed there. He said that World ORT's decision to hold its General Assembly in Warsaw was symbolic.

Recent state ceremonies commemorating Jewish wartime resistance and suffering and the 60th anniversary of the rebirth of Jewish statehood were "evidence of the special climate prevailing in Polish-Israeli and Polish-Jewish relations", Ewa Junczyk-Ziomecka, Secretary of State in the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland, told delegates on his behalf. "By choosing Warsaw as the venue in which to hold your deliberations you give new evidence of this."

"The global network of World ORT schools and educational projects reflects the bond holding together the Jewish community scattered all over the world. At the same time, your organisation is a beautiful example of how educational activities and the promotion of civil society serve to build bridges of understanding and confidence between individuals and nations," Ms Junczyk-Ziomecka continued.

The President concluded by welcoming World ORT's operational return to Poland with the installation of a state-of-the-art digital multimedia language laboratory at the Lauder-Morasha Jewish School in Warsaw, in partnership with the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation.

"For the first time in 40 years, World ORT is again present in Poland," Ms Junczyk-Ziomecka said on the President's behalf. "I believe that your educational project will render good service to the Jewish community in Poland and foster relations between our two nations."

# Making a song and dance of Science Journey

By Sherrie Gazit

The small town of Neshar, near Haifa, was a particularly appropriate venue for World ORT's gala event to celebrate Israel's 60th anniversary and the achievements of World ORT's Kadima Mada (Science Journey) programme.

As the Mayor of Neshar, David Arbar, said: "The cooperation between World ORT and Neshar that began two years ago has developed into very important contributions to the educational system here."

The Yitzchak Rabin High School at Neshar was one of the first participants in Science Journey and now boasts a 77 per cent high school matriculation rate, with 92.2 per cent of teenagers going on to serve in the IDF.

"These figures put the educational system in Neshar in the top of the scale and make me very proud," Mayor Arbar said.

So, with plenty to celebrate, World ORT delegates gathered in the foyer of the new Neshar Auditorium where they rubbed shoulders with mayors, Ministry of Education officials, academic faculty members, directors of partnering non-profit organisations and Science Journey school principals.

Following a delightful buffet supper, they entered the adjacent concert hall for a heartwarming festive event, a fittingly upbeat culmination to a special experience which had begun in Poland and which was to formally end the next day at the memorial

to Mordechai Anilevich, the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Fighter.

The extravaganza stage production celebrated Israel's 60th anniversary and displayed Science Journey achievements attained by World ORT's Representative Office in Israel since its inception in March 2007, through a lively mixture of song,

film, interviews, live declarations, photographs and captions.

The Master of Ceremonies expertly drew all the threads together and the whole event was interspersed with performances by the famous singer David Da'or and speeches from the Mayor of Neshar and World ORT dignitaries.

Particularly touching were the children's choir from the ORT Russia school in Moscow dressed in traditional costume, and the pupils from different schools and colleges in Israel who climbed on to the stage from within the audience to relate the stories of their own personal participation in Science Journey.



ORT Moscow students captured the hearts of the crowd at the Neshar gala concert.

# Israel mission inspires GA delegates

After the solemnity and hard work of the General Assembly in Warsaw came an opportunity for celebration and inspiration with a tour of World ORT projects in Israel.

More than 110 people from 20 countries flew from Poland to Israel were accompanied by some 160 students from ORT schools in Europe for the chance to see World ORT in action – and to celebrate the Jewish State's 60th anniversary.

In the north, participants attended the launch of smart classes at Shifman High School in Tirat HaCarmel and spoke to students, teachers and community leaders during tours of the multicultural Kadoorie High School in the Lower Galilee and the Druze Horfesh High School.

In the south, they visited Shikma High School at Hof Ashkelon and Sha'ar HaNegev High School, both of which are subject to rocket attacks from nearby Gaza – the visitors, in fact, left the area only 15 minutes before a Kassam fell there.

Even by Israeli standards it was hot, but it was inspiration rather than perspiration that characterised the Solidarity Mission.

"I loved being on a mission with the whole world of World ORT," said ORT America President Doreen Hermelin. "To hear about World ORT's activities in different countries is one thing but to meet people from Europe, from India, from South America who are actually doing it is another. And to share with them the excitement of seeing what World ORT is achieving in Israel was amazing. For people who had never been on a World ORT mission it was extremely informative and exciting to realise the scope of World ORT's work."

Among those first timers was Justice Sandra Chapnik, the President ORT Toronto. A relatively new member of the ORT family, Justice Chapnik found the mission "very enlightening".

"It's interesting to read about what World ORT is doing and to see the pictures but when you see the sparkle in the eyes of the students, you watch their progress in their love of learning, you see the respect engendered in the school environment between students and teachers, and you



Mission participants arrive at Kiryat Yam to lay the cornerstone of the Science City mega-project.

hear the gratitude they and the mayors have for what World ORT is doing, that's really quite amazing. You can see that you're making a difference, that whatever you do in this organisation makes a huge difference in people's lives."

On her return to Canada, Justice Chapnik wrote to friends and family: "The positive effect that World ORT technology labs, Teacher Empowerment Centres and the teaching of tzedakah and other Jewish values, engenders in the students, many of whom are immigrants, is beyond words. World ORT truly does make it possible for individuals, many from disadvantaged homes, to gain confidence, rise to their potential, realise their dreams and lead successful, productive lives."

ORT South Africa National Executive Committee member Martin Behr added: "It was very moving and satisfying to see World ORT projects at work. And everyone we met was so positive that you felt that your efforts are worthwhile."

Mr Behr, who is also a World ORT Officer, was among those who visited Shifman High

School, the latest school to have 10 of its classrooms transformed into high-tech smart classes as part of Kadima Mada (Science Journey), World ORT's programme to raise the level of science and technology education in Israel.

"It was fantastic how quickly the teachers and students had adapted to the smart classes; I found that very exciting," he said. "We watched them [using the interactive white board and connected laptops for] teaching physics and geography and it was brilliant, just brilliant."

At Kiryat Yam, Mr Behr was excited to see the remarkable speed with which progress was being made in implementing the Science City mega-project, which will see three acres of public land in the city centre transformed into a beautiful and practical communal resource featuring a sports centre, an open air science park, and a social, educational and cultural centre for Ethiopian Jewry.

And he paid tribute to the mayors in whose municipalities the Kadima Mada projects are being implemented.

"Their enthusiasm is what I found to be very infectious. We've picked marvellous partners in these mayors and school principals," he said.

Ariyeh Fahrjoun, the Mayor of Tirat HaCarmel, was in turn impressed by the World ORT delegates he met.

"What struck me was their spirit and their will to act, and to act without delay," Mayor Fahrjoun said, adding that the World ORT professionals he had dealt with strove for excellence. "It would be very good for the Israeli public sector to learn from World ORT."

The new smart classes at Shifman High School were "a great leap forward", he said.

"The students finally have a different educational experience. They can't forget lessons conducted with this technology: they can see it, hear it and it doesn't leave their minds," Mayor Fahrjoun said. "This is a new age. Those who don't learn on this new technology will be left behind. Without World ORT's input we would have lost a whole generation. Maybe 10 years down the line we would have been in the place we are now. It has been the greatest gift that my municipality was among those recommended to World ORT. Whoever it was that made the recommendation, I'd like to thank them!"

Both Mr Behr and Mrs Hermelin were impressed by the high morale and determination of the communities on the front line of the rocket attacks from Gaza.

"The Mayor of Sha'ar HaNegev, Alon Shuster, was such a vital guy – he was inspirational. They are so marvellous in their approach, their determination to carry on regardless. And whatever we have been able to do for them is so incredibly valued. It was tremendously moving," Mr Behr said.

Mrs Hermelin noted that Sha'ar HaNegev's students wanted to come to school, despite the constant risk of rocket attacks: "They are on the front line for Israel but it's their land and they don't want to be chased away. When we spoke to the children it was unbelievable. They are learning Arabic because they want to be able to get on with their neighbours one day."

## Seeking the next step in education

Amid the noise and action of the General Assembly, a group of distinguished intellects gathered to discuss the educational direction of World ORT.

Members of the Academic Advisory Council (AAC) have enough doctorates and professorships to paper at least one of the walls of the Warsaw Hilton conference room in which they met and, under the chairmanship of Professor Victor Halberstadt, they are committed to pooling their extraordinary abilities and experience to identify ways in which World ORT may best serve its students in the years to come.

It is a renaissance for the body which in its heyday boasted Sir Isaiah Berlin as a member and the meetings at the GA were an opportunity for long term members such as Professor Giacomo Saban and Professor Moshe Nussenzevig to share their accumulated wisdom with new members such as Professor Halberstadt and Professor Benjamin Ish-Shalom.

Underlying the discussions was the need for the AAC to assess what and how World ORT is teaching and to suggest changes to address the rapidly evolving demands of a globalising job market.

Dr Ephraim Buhks, the Director of ORT Operations USA, told AAC members that

there was a need for more on-line courses in English and other languages. The importance of languages was also raised by Dr Slava Leshchiner, Director of the World ORT Representative Office in Ukraine and Moldova. While, surprisingly for an organisation which focuses on science and technology, Professor Saban noted the demand in his country, Italy, to study classics.

ORT Chile Director Marcel Lewkow noted that, during the "golden age" of the AAC, the looming importance of robotics was identified. Consequently, ORT schools around the world found themselves ahead of the game in preparing students for the next leap in technology. There was now a need, Mr Lewkow added, to tap into the scientific expertise of AAC members to identify the next big thing.

However, Professor Ish-Shalom reminded those around the table that the "survival skills" which World ORT has taught down through the generations were, today, not just about finding professions but also to teach young Jews how to survive in terms of identity and culture. There was a need also to teach young people how to face multicultural challenges and how to behave in non-Jewish societies.



Professor Victor Halberstadt discusses the way forward at a meeting of the AAC with the professional heads of ORT national organisations.

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Designed and produced by: DS Print & Redesign

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ISSN 1681-648X © World ORT 2008